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Back Aches

It probably could not have mattered less to the imaginary enemies he knocked off right and left, but it is interesting to learn, some 400 years later, what made Ivan so Terrible. Low back trouble. Or at least that is the conjecture following an examination of the old tyrant's bones.

Oddly enough, Ivan was a rather nice chap until his first wife died and a strange illness laid him low in 1560. After that the first Russian Tsar literally saw red, formed a special corps to pick off suspected conspirators, flew into infernal rages and killed his own son.

Now a Soviet anthropologist-sculptor, Mikhail Gerasimov, has learned that Ivan's bones show he had trouble standing erect or bending over. It must have hurt like the mischief, as anyone with chronic back miseries can attest. Fortunately, not everyone is so minded, or at least has the chance, to vent his aches and pains on others, including seven wives, such as Ivan discarded with almost every twinge. But we all know how Ivan felt when he said: "Oh, my aching back—I feel terrible."